

OFF TO SWITZERLAND.

Scenes in a Section of a French Railway Coach.

PARISIAN SISTERS OF CHARITY.

A Railway Carriage Devoted Entirely to Ladies—Lost in the Cars—Crossing the Rhine.

[From a Lady Correspondent of the CHRONICLE.]

BALE, Switzerland, Sept. 20, 1875.

My friends continued to write me that Switzerland adorns herself in her most attractive robes during the Autumn months, as though preparing herself with greater ceremony for the sacrifice to Winter's icy embrace, and they also wrote me to take the train for Bale, which city I would reach at 9 o'clock, and where warm hearts and friendly arms would be ready to receive me. Entering a section at a depot at Paris I was surprised to see but one person within, and that a lady, whilst the rest of the train was well filled, so, after my settling myself in a corner, I summoned sufficient courage to ask the meaning of the sign "Dame," placed on the side of the section's door. "This department is for ladies alone," she answered, which was a pleasing surprise, as I was not aware that ladies were so much considered, and more particularly was it agreeable to reflect that no tobacco smoke was to blind my eyes nor the soiled floor to spot my robes. I had come to the conclusion that ladies traveling alone was an exceptional circumstance, as my companion and I remained undisturbed and no one entered to occupy the other two desirable corners, but soon the door was hastily opened by a strong hand, a pleasant face smiled on the empty seats, and then withdrew to permit a sister of charity to enter, and with her any amount of bag and baggage. Her entrance was soon followed by two other women, one genteel and advanced in years, the other much younger and bearing all the traces of the country peasant woman of France. The latter held in her arms a bundle of white skirts and soft woolen wraps, which she carried with unusual care. A robust form sprang upon the door-steps, and a cheerful voice called out: "Good-by, mother; take good care of yourself and the little one," at the same time leaning toward the old lady and kissing her on both cheeks; "let me have just one kiss from the little one: oh! the little dear," he exclaimed, with tender emotion, as the brown hands of the nurse unaviled

A LITTLE WEE PINK FACE.

And the kiss was softly deposited on its small cheek. The form swung around once more and was gone to make place for a pale, delicate looking lady, who sank wearily in one of the corners not considered desirable for baby. The Sister of Charity had stationed herself in front of the old lady who first occupied the section, and her merry face, frank manners, and honest, clear blue eyes, were all consistently sustained by her conversation, which was full of the general gossip concerning the events of ordinary life. Of course, on the request that windows might be closed on account of drafts, the attention of all present was attracted to the morsel of flesh drowned in the sea of white skirts and flannel wraps. The tiny fingers were delicately touched and the perfect form of the pink hand commented upon, but the little toes were invisible, the whole body being enveloped in a strongly-secured bundle to facilitate the straight shoot of the limbs, and just that which Rousseau assures us in his "Emile" is calculated to make cripples, hunchbacks and maimed creatures generally of the children so raised. As usual, baby was the means of establishing a friendly and sympathetic feeling among all present, the general conversation opening with questions relative to his short history and experience, much to the gratification of grandma, who proudly informs her listeners that the youthful hero had seen the light for the first time just four days previous and was journeying at an early age in order to take up his bed and board in the country. She also added that the child was her daughter's, who lived in Paris. "Oh! the poor mother," I innocently exclaimed, "to leave her little one taken from her when only four days old, bare it run the risk of taking cold on the way and dying from the effects if not later from some other cause!" This short speech had the effect of opening every pair of eyes in the car in wide astonishment at my barbarity, for whoever heard of one's preferring the unhealthy atmosphere of Paris to the pure air of the country, besides the majority of women at the French Capital are *dans les affaires* and have no time to nurse their children; even the Sister of Charity looked surprised at my ignorance, although she might have laid away in her memory the entire religious duty of woman in all departments of life. I felt sorry for the little bundle of pink flesh as I remembered many instances in which the little one was reported dead after two months short existence. The custom practiced in France of sending children away from the mother is also much condemned by Rousseau, who considers it the unmistakable cause of the great mortality of French children, and at the same time bewails the little innocents, who are often actually crucified, and thereby meet with an untimely death. The process of crucifixion is described by a hook being driven in the wall, and the youthful martyr more securely strapped and hung up by the belt, it being an effectual manner of stopping his screams, and supposed by

THE SIMPLE, IGNORANT PEASANT WOMAN

That a sudden elevation in life has the effect of amusing him quite as effectually as his elders, but which act is the cause, says Rousseau, of sending the blood to the head and preventing any disposition to scream, many children being found violet when taken down from the torture hook. We glanced at the rough form and hands of the nurse and wondered if she would hear the cries of the little one with the same solicitude as would its mother to whom nature had given the sentiment to strongly sympathize with her offspring, and would she handle the frail object with as delicate and loving hands as she whose face must then be wet with tears on account of the cruel parting, at the same time we imagined the strong brawny arms flinging the youthful hero over the hook which was to eventually extinguish the feeble spark of life. In a short time another Sister of Charity made her appearance, more youthful than the first, who, however, unlike her, opened her carefully covered prayer book, devouring its contents as though for the first time, and apparently taking no notice of her surroundings, whilst the other chatted on in the most lively manner possible, giving a detailed history of women who had had thirteen children and died in giving birth to the fourteenth, the trial with nurses and all the domestic miseries of this wicked world. The baby soon left us, after which came the station for breakfast, the sisters and the old lady opening their satchels and drawing therefrom a comfortable looking lunch with fruit, whilst the pale lady and myself were the only ones to wend our way to the *table d'hôte*, which, however, was in agreeable readiness, occasioning no delay whatever in the ordering of dishes. We were amused at a young American gentleman at table, who was interpreter for a whole family, and true to old habits would not eat his meal without butter, a thing seldom found unevoked on a French table, and who called out in sonorous tones, "Boor!" "Boor," said the Frenchman, scratching his head, "boor!" when his wife with her quick wit touched his elbow and suggested that it was perhaps *beurre* the young gentleman wished, whereupon it was brought and proved the right thing, to the satisfaction of all parties. Wishing at the close of the collation to interpret for two young gentlemen, one of whom wished to pay for the other, he called out, "Doo," which by means of signs was readily interpreted as *deux*, whereupon we realized that the delicate shades of sound had never been defined by his youthful ears. Soon after returning to the car, both Sisters of Charity left us, whose absence was the cause of our commenting on other qualities, and the occasion of the conversation waxing warmer on other subjects.

THE PALE LADY

Was French, but had passed many years in Brazil, her husband being Portuguese, and who had been able to see her countrymen from a distance, which did not have the effect, however, of diminishing their imperfections. "No; I love my country dearly," she said. "I am thoroughly French in that, but I do not admire my compatriots. The French character is too frivolous, too selfish, and the Frenchman too little patriotic. Why have we been humiliated and trodden under the feet of the Prussians? Because the French officer has been weakened by luxury and become a coward. I had a friend who held a high position and who tossed his feathers with a grand flourish, but at the moment of battle he turned to run, and received twenty bullets in his back, discharged by his own soldiers. Fie on such men! Were it not for the poor laborer who works there in the field what would become of France? Yet has the poor peasant to labor against not only the evil effects of overwork, but against that of ignorance itself. It is these same hard-worked simple people who are made to fight the battle for others' glory, and whilst the nests of their superiors are well feathered and inviting, their road is over stones, through thickets and without shoes to cover their feet." The pale face flushed and the mild eyes flashed as the delicate lady grew more and more eloquent. When at last she left us there was a general hand-shaking all around and many expressions of regret at parting. The old lady and I were left alone, which time we spent in pleasant discussion until she too bade adieu with apparent sorrow. At the same station entered a lady who took possession of a corner in a rather dejected manner. My regret on losing the friends which had left me rather discouraged any desire to make any new acquaintance,

but by-and-by a pleasant voice addressed me and I soon learned that my new companion was Swiss, and on becoming acquainted with the fact that I was on my way to see her native land, the tears moistened her eyes and she became most enthusiastic in the praise of the country she loved so well. The tears came readily, for her heart was still heavy at the parting from her only child, a daughter, whom she had given in marriage to a brave man she loved, and now she was on the road to her home which she would find desolate, for Susie, her daughter, was but a small child, the two had dwelt alone together; she would miss her in every corner of the house and all objects would constantly talk of her, but a mother's love alone is capable of great sacrifice and so she looked only at the happiness of her child. We were sorry to have her leave and longed to stay the terrible trial of reaching a home which still bore the name but had

LOST ITS CHARM.

My sympathies had been too strongly excited to permit of a stranger gaining my attention, and so to hide the softness of my heart from my own eyes, wrapped myself in a covering of cold indifference and steeled my thoughts to future tenderness. For some time I was the sole occupant of the section, until a lady in deep mourning made her appearance and shrank into a corner, whilst she gazed intently out of the window. I pretended to sleep, and was determined to be faithful to the friends I had lost and not efface their memory by the faces of new ones; besides a spirit of suspicion had seized me, and as I gazed on the form robed in black I could not refrain from thinking of adventurers and pick-pockets. I remembered that I had left my fan in the center of the seat, and I could not see it from where I sat; and as I had closed my eyes some time I felt perfectly convinced that my companion had taken it. At this moment I saw her fumbling in a pocket on her left side, besides having one visible on her right, a fact of itself suspicious, so I hastily rose from my position, when, sure enough, the fan was gone, which discovery caused me to look nervously for the alarm bell, feeling convinced that I was in the society of one of those notorious women thieves for which Paris is renowned. After seeing that all other articles were safe, I again searched for the missing fan, when I discovered it to my surprise behind the seat, where it had rolled. Instead of being ashamed of my suspicions, through the strange perversity of human nature I was provoked to find myself mistaken in such strong convictions; however I owed the lady some consideration for the injustice I had done her in my thoughts, and addressed her some questions which led to her informing me that she was traveling alone for pleasure and instruction, that she was rich and could well afford a traveling companion, but that she had no acquaintances who could satisfactorily fill the role, and that any one of them would have been more of a burden than comfort. The country from Paris to Bale is far less beautiful, far less picturesque than the western and direct southern portion. There was the distinctive character of prettiness, gentleness and beauty, the tall trees figuring as the important ornament, but the scenery was unvaried, the land being divided into large farms, extending over a flat country with an occasional running off into fir green hills. Further on great pastures of open country were to be seen, their high green grass being watered by wide streams and trampled upon by vast herds of cattle. From this part of the country are obtained

THE MILK, CHEESE AND BUTTER

Chiefly consumed at Paris, and the fat, splendid looking cows in imagination cast a richer shade in the distance on the milk we had drank there. As we neared Alsace the trees grew stouter, the grass shorter, and substantiability took the place, in scenic effect, of the graceful and beautiful. It was just as the sun was setting we reached Belfort, whose ramparts gleamed from the high hill before us, and the bayonets of the soldiers glistened and flashed in the golden light. It was already dark when we reached Montreuxvieux, where, as by magical transportation, we found ourselves surrounded by strange, foreign-looking men, all speaking as rapidly as possible the German language. At that point all passengers en route to Germany were obliged to deliver the keys of their trunks and submit to an investigation by the Custom-house officials. My companion informed me that she was anxious to perceive how the Prussians examined the baggage, and so descended. I followed her example, but soon lost my companion in the crowd; I was, however, much amused to see the Prussian run his nose into every little nook and corner, appearing determined to find cause for complaint whether or no. Not long ago a lady on her way from Paris experienced the same inspection of her trunks, when an old French newspaper was found enveloping an article of apparel, whereupon she had the pleasure of being attended by two monstrous gendarmes and a serious time during four hours spent in the Custom-house. As my curiosity was not to be measured with that of the Prussians, I soon hastened back to the car, but failed to find my section, the inscription "Dame" having disappeared. An old French gentleman with characteristic politeness assisted me in the search, but to no avail. The shawl which had answered as a guide was no where to be found; at last I believed to have discovered my section, but all my articles had disappeared—been stolen—for there were

THE BLACK SATCHEL AND SHAWL STRAP

Of my companion untouched. All my suspicious spirit was again more forcibly roused, and I felt convinced that her excuse to watch the Prussians was to watch an opportunity to appropriate my baggage, but after a close inspection of satchel and shawl strap, and more particularly on a strange lady entering and claiming them, I came to the conclusion that I had made a mistake in the section, which discovery necessitated another distracted promenade. At last, in sheer desperation, I opened a door bearing a strange inscription and which I had supposed belonged to the officials of the road, when lo! there were the shawls, bundles, etc., just as we had left them. I then made an investigation of the inscription, when I read by the feeble light the word *Frauen*, which had magically replaced *Dame*. Thereinore for the injustice I had perpetrated against my companion was this time thoroughly genuine, and to quiet the pangs of conscience I devoted myself to her and gave her such a glowing description of America that she immediately decided to go to the Centennial, and wished to renew her ticket at Milleuse for Bale. From Milleuse to Bale I occupied the section alone, but was soon cheered by brilliant lights, which flashed in the distance like so many stars; then, as we crossed a majestic bridge, I looked down on the proud Rhine, which reflected the stars on its broad, clear surface. We entered a splendid *gare*, the stout German screamed out Basel, and I next found myself pressed against the warm hearts of my Swiss friends.

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